

Faith and Inspiration

What Potential

One could argue that human beings are the pinnacle of God's creative achievement. While we are described in some translations of scripture as being "a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:7), this may not be an entirely accurate rendering of the original language.

There are some scholars who insist that a more proper reading within the context of the writing may be "a little lower than God (or the gods)." We do know from the book of Genesis that when God culminated the creation of the universe by bringing humankind into existence, he designated his results conclusively as "very good," as compared to everything previously manifested as categorically "good." Human beings thus appear to be God's distinctly singular and superlative handiwork, fashioned in his image and imbued with unique qualities and capabilities.

In an episode of the "Star Trek" prequel television series "Enterprise," explorers from the planet Vulcan visit Earth during the 1950s as part of a galactic survey expedition. Having crashed on our planet due to a malfunctioning star-ship, the Vulcan crew do their best to remain incognito among the humans of a small Pennsylvania mining town. They each develop their own analysis and impression of human beings based on their individual observations and interactions.

At one point the leader of the crew, T'Mir, has a conversation with her fellow crew member, Mestral, that reveals their differing perspectives and opinions.

T'MIR: Open your eyes. They revel in violence. They devote what little technology they have to devising ways of killing each other.

MESTRAL: So did we centuries ago. They just haven't realised their potential yet.

T'MIR: What potential?

MESTRAL: They have great empathy and compassion. Look how we've been made to feel welcome.

A common philosophical debate centers on whether human beings are innately "good" or "bad." If we are able to make an effort to evaluate humanity objectively, we can readily observe that we are indeed remarkable creatures. Having God's image imprinted on us means that we possess certain capabilities not granted to other creatures, such as creative liberty in

thought and action — what amounts to free will.

Moreover, we were presumably designed for fellowship and intimacy with God and each other, but apparently, we can choose isolation and alienation instead. It is this capacity to choose that led to what is often referred to as the "fall" of humanity, the separation from the originally natural communion with God and the rest of his creation. Humanity chose to rely on its own rationalization and ambition rather than trust fully in God's provision and benevolence.



Vincent V. Marshburn
Homestead Mennonite Church



While the reality of evil may have existed prior to Adam and Eve's initial sin (it appears that Satan had previously inaugurated the notion of rebellion against God), it is certainly conceivable that humankind could have been spared the detrimental consequences, avoiding the suffering and anguish that ensued.

In some (perhaps many) modern Church congregations, it may be unusual to encounter the topic of sin. In our contemporary "hyper-sensitive" times, those who are charged with delivering God's word might find it challenging to broach such a potentially controversial or, as deemed by some, "inappropriate" or "offensive" subject.

Instead, it is perhaps more common to be regaled with messages that are intended to somehow assuage our souls and sensibilities, attempting to make us feel better about ourselves, at least superficially, to the exclusion of accepting the reality of our actual spiritual condition.

The Bible clearly addresses the issue of sin, and not merely for the sake of pointing out someone's shortcomings, or for the purpose of elevating one set of individuals above another, or solely for the intention of pure and harsh condemnation.

Rather, the Bible emphasizes humanity's sinful nature in contrast to God's holy and perfect nature in order to unequivocally illustrate and demonstrate humanity's need for redemption. This sinful nature applies to every human being in existence, who has ever or will ever live until the final restoration of Creation.

While people often point to Jesus's treatment of people

identified as "sinners" in contrast to those who portrayed themselves as self-righteous, noting how he welcomed all who sought him in earnest and would often fellowship with many of those considered "deplorables" in their culture, we should also be mindful that he did not ever in any instance condone or ignore sin. Indeed, he assertively affirms that "neither do I condemn you," but also gently admonishes us to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

In essence, the Bible indicates that no one is truly "good" (Psalm 14:3, Romans 3:10). It is, in fact, the development of sin among humankind that made it necessary for God to prepare his plan of redemption from the beginning (Genesis 3:15) and even before (Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:9).

In his infinite knowledge, wisdom, and love, God foresaw the fall of humanity and understood that he would need to arrange for the most preeminent sacrifice to atone for all the dire and deadly ramifications of sin.

This culminated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, establishing the essential criteria for acceptance by God: trusting in this indemnifying and reconciling achievement. Humanity may have been God's initial zenith of creation, but Jesus's sacrifice for humanity was God's crowning capstone of restoration.

On a fundamental and practical level, rather than oversimplifying our identification of people as "good" or "bad," it is perhaps more meaningful to understand that our actions are the result of choices, and that very often our situations are products of the sum of those choices.

Furthermore, how we respond to our situations, including how we treat others in these situations, is a matter of choice as well. We can choose to give in to the temptations to sin, indulging in self-satisfying or destructive impulses, or we can choose to be guided by the Spirit and live in the context of the grace we enjoy in Jesus, exhibiting the love for God and our fellow human beings that we are called to.

The answer to the question of whether we are inherently "good" or "bad" is that we are all capable of both kindness, generosity, and magnanimity, as much as we are capable of selfishness, depravity, and cruelty. On our own, without the benefit of the Holy Spirit to lead us toward realizing the redemption provided by Jesus at the behest of his Father, we will never be able to restore that fellowship and harmony that was shattered back in the Garden of Eden.

It would be most prudent to recognize our capacity for all the heights and depths of human nature and accept the facts and substance of God's love and grace, which will ultimately guide us toward fulfilling our purpose and potential.

October is Emotional Wellness Month



October is Emotional Wellness Month, making it a great time to put emotional health in the spotlight. According to Mental Health America, 31% of adults will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetime, over 17 million adults have depression, and 7% of the adult population has major depression. Clearly, we need to put a bigger emphasis on emotional wellness, including what it is and how to improve it.

“Emotional health confronts your internal states of being. Emotions being love, anger, joy, and sadness. Emotions can be broken down into secondary and tertiary states,” explains Katie Sandler, personal development and career coach. “Emotions and behaviors go hand in hand, such that our emotions conduct systems - reactions, choices, goals, perception, etc.”

Stress, anxiety, and low self-worth are all emotional aspects of our health which require tending to. Emotional health shows up in positive attitudes, high self-esteem and self-worth, and a healthy body image. Some ways we can tend to and bolster our emotional wellness include:

- Learn to identify emotions. Being able to identify emotions happens to be extremely challenging for even the most successful. It is not something we were truly taught to identify and then articulate. Start by simply becoming aware of your own emotional states and patterns. Once you become aware of them you can learn to successfully work through them in a healthy way, and ensure they don't become overwhelming.
- Master coping skills. Coping is a wonderful tool for tending to our emotional health and building resilience. Coping comes in many different shapes and sizes - it's important for people to build a tool box of effective personal coping mechanisms. This also requires a period of trial and error. Coping can be done through things like meditation, spending time in nature, phoning a friend, doing breathing exercises, or journaling. Once you find one that works, add it to the ethereal tool box and remember to pull it out in times of need.
- Get to know you. Work on understanding yourself (aka loving yourself). The more you lean into yourself and show a desire to be curious and compassionate, the greater the likelihood of you shifting into emotional health. We spend a lot of time getting to know others, but very little time getting to know ourselves, and we need to change that.
- Practice mindfulness. According to Harvard University, mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and acceptance. The benefits of practicing mindfulness include decreasing depression, improving emotional reactivity, improves resiliency, and improving healthy coping skills. One of the most effective ways to improve mindfulness is to practice mindfulness meditation.
- Get physically active. Not only is getting enough physical exercise each week important to your overall health, but it's beneficial for your emotional wellness, too. The Mayo Clinic reports that exercise can help to improve depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as improve mood and help you feel better overall. Additionally, exercise helps people feel more confident and releases feel-good endorphins. Aim for getting at least 30 minutes of exercise per day on three to five days per week to get the most benefits. Every day you should spend time on emotional wellness,” added Sandler. “When you do that it will pay off in all areas of your life. Make yourself a priority, stick with it, and see the beauty of the results.”

24-hour MEGA Match-A-Thon returns to Tropical Park connecting families with their new best furry friends

The 9th annual Miami-Dade County Animal Services' MEGA Match-A-Thon pet adoption festival kicks off on Friday, October 22, at 11:59 p.m., and runs all day Saturday, October 23, until 11:59 p.m., at Tropical Park, 7900 SW 40th St, Miami.

Whatever your preference, you are sure to find your perfect match. The family friendly festival features more than 300 shelter dogs and cats who need loving homes.

Potential adopters will have a 24-hour window of opportunity to meet hundreds of shelter pets and find their new best friend.

“We are delighted to bring our shelter pets out to the community in hopes of finding them caring homes,” said Lorna Mejia-Lopez, Interim Director of Miami-Dade County Animal Services. “Over the years, the Mega Match-A-Thon has evolved from a pet adoption event to a magnificent pet extravaganza and pet adoption festival. The Match-A-Thon is an event we look forward to every year because it allows us to match hundreds of our pets with a loving forever family.”

All pets adopted are spayed or



neutered, vaccinated and microchipped. Special pricing will be offered for the 24-hour pet adoption festivities.

Dogs 4 months and older: Adoption fees waived. Adopters will only be responsible for the \$30 tag fee.

Puppies younger than 4 months: \$85 Cats and Kittens: Adoption fees waived.

Animal Services is hosting a full-blown festival to facilitate shelter pet adoptions. The event includes air-conditioned tents for the comfort of our pets and pet seekers, as well as round-the-clock entertainment, food trucks and activities. Below is a quick overview of the line-up.

Miami Food Truck Events

Free kids zone with rides Local Vendors

Live music provided by The School of

Rock Coral Gables and other performances

To ensure adherence to social distancing rules and for the safety and protection of adopters and staff, the number of individuals allowed in the adoption areas at any one time will be strictly controlled. All visitors at this event will be required to wear masks or face coverings at all times.

Pet lovers are encouraged to follow our efforts before and during the event by visiting miami-dade.gov/animals or following Animal Services on social media @AdoptMiamiPets.

Miami-Dade County Animal Services (Animal Services) announced it will return to a 7-day per week operation as of Sunday, October 10, 2021, and resume Sunday hours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., which were suspended at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Returning to the 7-day schedule will provide pet

owners and prospective adopters with more options in scheduling needed services for their pets at the Wellness Clinic or visiting the Pet Adoption and Protection Center to adopt a new best friend.

“We are thrilled to be able to return to an extended schedule which offers our residents more options for their convenience in caring for their pets or visiting us to take home a new four-legged family member,” said Lorna Mejia-Lopez Interim Director of Animal Services.

Temple Hatikvah

Homestead Jewish Center

A Reform Congregation

183 NE 8th St., Homestead

For information please call

Keep up with everything local. Subscribe today 305-245-2311

SOUTH DADE NEWSLEADER



LESLE BURKHEAD

305-282-9603

List your home with me = SOLD
Call for a free property analysis.



Call a **DEPENDABLE** Hometown Realtor that will work hard for you when you're buying or selling!

**Now's the Time to Buy or Sell
Market is Hot!**

FOR THE BEST RESULTS
STAY WITH THE BEST!!